

Guide To Sanskrit Pronunciation

In Sanskrit every letter is pronounced; there are no silent letters. Every letter has only one sound, except for the letter **v** (see below).

Length of Vowels

Vowels are either short or long. Short vowels are **a**, **i**, **u**, and **ṛ**. Long vowels are **ā**, **ī**, **ū**, **e**, and **o**. A long vowel is held for twice as long as a short one.

Vowels

The English equivalents are approximations.

a	as in <i>but</i> or <i>cup</i>	ā	as in <i>father</i> or <i>calm</i>
i	as in <i>sit</i> or <i>pick</i>	ī	as in <i>seat</i> or <i>clean</i>
u	as in <i>put</i> or <i>pull</i>	ū	as in <i>pool</i> or <i>mood</i>
e	as in <i>save</i> or <i>wait</i>	o	as in <i>coat</i> or <i>cone</i>

ṛ is a vowel pronounced with the tip of the tongue bent slightly back toward the roof of the mouth, while making a sound between the **ur** in *curd* and the **ri** in *cricket*.

The next two vowels are diphthongs, combinations of sounds that are composed of two distinct vowels pronounced in rapid succession. Each diphthong, represented by two letters in transliteration, is written as a single letter in the Sanskrit alphabet and has the same length as a long vowel.

ai	as in <i>pie</i> or <i>sky</i>
au	as in <i>town</i> or <i>cow</i>

Consonants

c	as in <i>such</i> , never as in <i>cave</i> or <i>celery</i>
s	as in <i>seek</i> or <i>sight</i>
ś	as in <i>shine</i> or <i>shower</i>
ṣ	is pronounced like ś , except that the tip of the tongue is bent slightly back toward the roof of the mouth, as in <i>assure</i> .
t, d, n	are pronounced with the tip of the tongue against the top teeth.
ṭ, ḍ, ṇ	are pronounced with the tip of the tongue bent slightly back to touch the roof of the mouth.

ph	as in <i>pin</i> or <i>uphold</i> , never as in <i>photo</i> or <i>phase</i>
th	as in <i>top</i> or <i>hothouse</i> , never as in <i>think</i> or <i>there</i>
ṁ	denotes not the consonant <i>m</i> , but simply a nasalization of the preceding vowel, as in the three nasal sounds in the French phrase <i>un grand pont</i> .
ṅ	as in <i>ink</i> , <i>ingot</i> , or <i>sing</i>
ñ	as in <i>bench</i> or <i>enjoy</i>
ṣ	as gny . Represents a single letter in the Sanskrit alphabet.
ṛ	is a rolled r , as in Spanish <i>para</i> .
ṡ	is a soft v when following a vowel or beginning a word; when following a consonant (as in <i>tvam</i>), it is like a w but with minimal rounding of the lips.
ḥ	at the end of a phrase, indicates that the previous vowel is echoed; for example, <i>śāntiḥ</i> is pronounced <i>śāntihi</i> .

When consonants are followed by **h**, as in **bh**, **ph**, **dh**, **gh**, or **ch**, the consonant is aspirated, as in *abhor*, *uphold*, *adhere*, *doghouse*, or *woodchuck*.

A consonant written twice, such as **dd** or **tt**, is pronounced as a single sound and is held twice as long as a single consonant.

